

# National Forests in Alabama

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# News

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## For Immediate Release

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### **USDA Forest Service Prescribed Burns Underway To Protect Alabama From Wildfires**

(Montgomery, Al) January 20, 2006 ---- USDA Forest Service fire specialists plan to deliberately burn approximately 80,000 acres throughout Alabama's national forests with the goal of protecting communities from the threat of wildfires and improving forest health. Because of the prescribed burns, those living or traveling near the Bankhead, Conecuh, Talladega, and Tuskegee national forests may notice smoke and an increase in Forest Service personnel and equipment near roads. If smoke is in the area, look for prescribed burn signs, keep lights on low beam, and drive slow. Persons with smoke sensitivities should also take precautions.

Protection from wildfires is critical to Alabama communities. Efforts to reduce wildfire threats on the National Forests in Alabama have increased over the years. More than 83,000 acres of national forests were burned in 2005 to reduce fuels, tree diseases, and improve wildlife habitat. "We take our prescribed burns very seriously", said Miera Crawford, deputy forest supervisor for the National Forests in Alabama. Fire specialists' use of prescribed fire, a safe and low-burning fire, will burn pine needles and dead branches on the ground, which could otherwise build to dangerous levels and lead to catastrophic wildfires. "If the ground floor of a forest remains untreated, over time it will result in a major fuel build-up," said Crawford.

“While wildfire protection and improving forest health are goals of the Forest Service, the safety of communities near our burns is always a top priority,” Crawford said. A lot of careful planning and training goes into a prescribed burn program. For example, the decision to burn has to take place during favorable weather conditions. Forest Service fire personnel are trained in determining how the weather affects fire behavior. “It is our job to work hard at reducing smoke impacts and notifying the public about planned burns so they will know what to expect,” said Greg Born, National Forests in Alabama fire management officer.

Please call a Forest Service district office if you have questions about the following planned burns that will take place during the next three months: Bankhead Forest is planning to burn 13,000 acres in Winston and Lawrence counties call the office at (205) 489-5111; Talladega Forest- Talladega and Shoal Creek Districts are planning to burn 24,000 acres in Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne and Talladega counties call the Heflin office at (256) 463-2272 or the Talladega office at (256) 362-2909; Conecuh Forest is planning to burn 20,000 acres in Escambia and Covington counties call (334) 222-2555; Talladega Forest - Oakmulgee District plan to burn 21,000 acres in Bibb, Dallas, Perry, Tuscaloosa, Hale, and Chilton counties call (205) 926-9765; and the Tuskegee Forest is planning to burn 2,500 acres in Macon county call (334) 727-2652.